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STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS: IRAN

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STRATEGIC REPORT: IRAN

1. Current Situation:

Almost six years and three months of Ayatollah Khomeini's rule have led Iran to a pivotal, unstable position. Domestic control is based on widespread repression, political execution, systematic torture, and ill-treatment of prisoners and populace. There is no voice, no vote, and no choice for the terrorised Iranian people. For four years and six months, war with Iraq has continued. Almost 270,000 Iranians have been killed and 650,000 wounded or missing in action in the war. The treasury and blood of the country has been exhausted in this war; the economy has been destroyed, food shortages have created widespread problems. There are 5,000,000 unemployed. Six Iranian states have been devastated by the war. The population of Iran has reached 42,000,000, half under 16 years of age, and two-thirds under 30 years of age. There are 2,500,000 small arms in the hands of the people, apart from those held by the Armed Forces. The people are keeping distant from the mosques and Khomeini. The Armed Forces, police, Gendarmerie, and even some of the Revolutionary Guards and the majority of the moderate clergy, are unhappy with the present regime.

2. Non-Ruling Power Blocs Inside Iran

- (a) Moderate forces, such as former Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, have been paralyzed.
- (b) The Mujahedin-e-Khalq forces inside of Iran have been destroyed, and some of its members are working with Kurdish leader Abdur al-Rahman Ghassemlou, a pro-Soviet communist.
- (c) The Marxist Fedayeen-e-Khalq are underground and are presumed still under Soviet control.
- (d) The Tudeh Party has been outlawed but it retains underground cells, all still under direct Soviet control.
- (e) The Iranian Armed Forces remain outside the political power structure, but remain potentially the major element in deciding the future outcome of any power struggle.

3. Opposition Groups Outside Iran

Most external opposition groups and leaders are based in Europe, the US and elsewhere. They include:

- (i) Dr Ali Amini, former Prime Minister under the late Shah; currently in Paris. He is coordinator of much opposition activity and is an experienced politician. He has not yet succeeded in having a viable organization to send his message to the Iranian

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population inside the country.

(ii) Dr Shahpour Bakhtiar, very briefly the last Prime Minister under the late Shah. He lacks real organization, although he has sufficient money. He is politically naive, without perception of geopolitics. His identification with Iraq has created great problems for him, and has jeopardized any role he could play in the future.

(iii) Mohssen Pezeshkpour, leader of Pan-Iranist Party. Anti-communist; has followers inside of Iran, especially in the Khuzestan area. Lacks international perception and contacts.

(iv) Admiral Ahmad Madani and Mr Nazih and other National Front leaders: while they were in Iran they had an organization. Now that they are outside, they have been unable to establish any organization or command and control structure.

(v) Shah Reza Pahlavi, pretender to the throne, has gained some experience in the past six years, but still lacks political, strategic and economic knowledge. He has been surrounded by former SAVAK and Bahai officials. He has come to the scene prematurely.

(vi) The Azadegan movement, organized by former Imperial Iranian Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief Gen. Bahram Aryana and former Iranian Minister to Washington Dr Assad Homayoun. This is the organization which executed the seizure of the Iranian patrol boat "Tabarzin" in 1981. General Aryana has handed over the leadership of Azadegan to Dr Homayoun. The organization is headquartered in Paris, but maintains an underground force with links into Iran.

(vii) Former Armed Forces Officers, diplomats and technocrats in the US and Europe are, by and large, ready to follow any opposition leader who can take a strong initiative and who may have the support of the United States.

All these groups have, for the past six years, been preoccupied with infighting rather than in combating the Khomeini regime. They proved unable to work together or to face the realities of the situation. No unified message could be sent to the Iranian public demonstrating an alternative to Khomeini. Group work has been alien to the nature, reflecting traditional Persian culture. Some, like Dr Amini, are to some extent realists, but lack leadership capabilities and viable organizational backup, including contact inside Iran.

For the past six years, the United States has waited for these groups to become united. The groups, on the other hand, have been waiting for US support. Throughout Iranian history, such groups have been unable to work without a catalyst and singular leadership. Unless such a catalyst or leadership is ready from within these groups they will face a vacuum after the demise of Khomeini. Such a power vacuum may arise before the death of Kho-

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meini, due to the pressures of the wrecked economy and the impact of the war with Iraq.

#### 4. Probable Contingencies

(a) Immediate Contingencies: In the event of the short-term death of Khomeini, a series of events may take place. There are six factors which could influence the future course of development in Iran, and which will have an impact in the future. Those include political power groups inside of Iran, political groups outside of Iran (opposition), the United States, the USSR and Iraq, friendly regional and unfriendly regional powers. These are shown on the enclosed table [Appendix A]. But of critical importance is the action of the US after the death of Khomeini.

It is likely that, after the demise of Khomeini, there would be chaos and a struggle for power, and disintegration of state structures. It is important for the US to support democratic moves to prevent communist forces gaining control at this stage, or to prevent the cooperation of the clergy with the communists.

Since outside opposition groups are not likely to get united, it is important for the United States to pick a single Iranian leader and to support him. The US should signal to other opposition groups to this effect. If the US gives such support to a competent leader, all groups will follow. Unity will come after the leadership is chosen, not before. Such a leader and his group should be competent to make contact with police, Gendarmerie, Armed Forces, tribal groups, moderate clergy (including Ayatollahs Shariatmadari and Golpiyegani, Ghomi and Ruhanni and others), etc., inside Iran, and to build networks of support there.

A message to the Armed Forces assuring that any new leadership would continue to respect the territorial integrity of Iran, and that any peace would be honorable would help to eliminate the prospect of a radical clergy assumption of power. Failure to have a US-backed moderate leadership, able to work with the Army, could allow the vacuum in Iran to be filled by a radical nationalist leadership such as that in Libya, or for it to become (either de facto or openly) a pro-Soviet satellite.

After the demise of Khomeini the loyalty of the Armed Forces becomes a critical factor in the success of any movement. In the past few weeks, President Khamenei indicated that the position of commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces would go to him. But Speaker Rafsanjani has mentioned several times that it will be transferred to Khomeini's successor or to a council of successors.

(b) Non-Immediate Contingencies (Between six and 18 months). It can be assumed that Ayatollah Khomeini will not be able to retain control of Iran for the long term (ie: beyond a year to 18 months). This gives the US a brief breathing space to prepare its position and to directly force the unity of leadership and action

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of the opposition movements so that they can have a viable structure ready for the death or demise of Khomeini.

If work begins immediately, the one group with military and political assets inside Iran (Azadegan) can undertake the following preparatory steps:

- Contact with former intelligence officials inside Iran to assist in information gathering and cell building;
- Contact with current Iranian intelligence officials to assist in information gathering and counter-intelligence;
- Contact with current and former Armed Forces officers, moderate clergy and security officials and tribal leaders on both sides of the Iranian borders;
- Contact with Bazaar leaders and internal groups, including where possible some Pasdaran units.

The objectives could include the gathering of intelligence, which would help identify where (for example) Soviet and pro-Soviet groups have penetrated Iran. It would also include the creation of action groups to undertake psycho-political, or propaganda, operations, and to create catalytic units in all vital areas of the country to be used when necessary.

Azadegan has the manpower and potential to undertake these tasks while at the same time being able to provide political leadership to all major opposition groups. The cooperation of such leaders as Dr Amini, Mr Pezeshkpour, Admiral Madani, General Aryana and others can be guaranteed by Azadegan provided it is given the support of the United States. Azadegan already maintains links with most opposition leaders, especially Dr Amini and Mr Pezeshkpour.

The failure of the United States to take up the options available to it will lead to the certainty that the Soviet Union will use its extensive influence inside Iran to shape events to its own purpose.

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APPENDIX (i)  
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Internal Iranian Events  
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1. Struggle for succession and the emergence of a leader.
2. The military responds favorably/unfavorably.
3. ~~The non-communist opposition rises.~~
4. The communist opposition rises.
5. Coalition emerges of the clergy and military/Revolution Guard.
6. Prosecution of the war against Iraq maintained by the successor government (most likely under radical/fundamentalist regime).
7. Successor democratic government requests US political, military and economic assistance, and recognition.

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External Democratic Opposition Group Events  
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1. Struggle for dominance within the various opposition groups and the emergence of dominant group(s), or individual leader with strategy and organization.
2. Overt move to challenge post-Khomeini power by establishing links with democratic/moderate factions within Iran.
3. Proclamation of new Government with support of military and democratic/moderate factions.
4. Request for US/Western governments for military/economic assistance to rebuild the country.
5. Begin peace negotiations with Iraq.

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Events in the United States

1. Alert US military forces in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean (CENTCOM).
2. Covert support of democratic forces inside Iran.
3. Covert/overt support of democratic opposition forces, or single leader outside of Iran.
4. De facto recognition of post-Khomeini democratic leadership.
5. US offer to mediate peaceful settlement of Iran-Iraq war (under friendly government).
6. US offer to assist in Iranian post-war reconstruction.

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USSR/Iraqi Events

1. Iraq/USSR recognize new Iranian Government, especially if it is communist or pro-communist/pro-Soviet.
2. USSR covert/overt support of communist and front elements inside Iran.
3. USSR support of clergy/left coalition.
4. USSR/Iraq launch combined political, military and insurgent attacks on the new government if it is neutral or pro-West.
5. USSR/Iraq promote underground resistance and guerilla operations on a sustained scale against any moderate elements in a new Iranian government, or in the Armed Forces, or against the entire government if pro-West.
6. USSR support for revolt and separation movements in Azerbaijan, Kurdistan and Baluchistan in the case of civil war.
7. Military intervention in the northern half of Iran in case of the disintegration, or an Armed Forces move against communist/clergy coalition, especially if US engaged elsewhere (Korea, Central America, etc.) 1921 Treaty between Iran and USSR gives the USSR an excuse to interfere; the Khomeini abrogation of the Treaty is not recognized by the USSR).
8. USSR likely to promote diversion activities elsewhere in the world (Korea, Central America) to maintain US concentration away from Iran during buildup of Soviet forces inside Iran. [Such diversions were successfully used by the USSR prior to the Afghan invasion.]

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Events Among Friendly Regional Powers

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1. Recognition of moderate, pro-Western government, should one emerge in Iran.
2. Shipment of arms and other technology to reconstruct Iran's military and economic base.
3. Offer to mediate peace with Iraq (especially by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Jordan).
4. Formulation of Persian Gulf "security system" considering military and economic issues.

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Events in Unfriendly Regional Powers

1. Instigate and support opposition to the formation of democratic, pro-Western government, and support of radical fundamentalist factions.
- 2. Increased pressure on Iraq to continue war against a democratic government by offering arms, financial support and political-military assistance.
3. Organize radical Shiite groups outside Iran to form "government in exile" and conduct terrorist campaign against Iranian interest in other countries (especially with Libyan and Syrian support).

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